

# NICKERSON







# DEDICATED . . .

to the Nickerson pioneers, the present residents and the Nickersonites of tomorrow.

One hundred years have elapsed since the pioneers ventured to this part of the country. Many were the hardships and disasters but they bore them bravely. Much progress has been made through the past and may we continue their work and to have a city that we are proud of. A city full of law abiding citizens, a city full of progress and a city full of friendly people.

This book was condensed from letters, news articles, Kansas Books, and information from senior citizens. We hope it will bring back fond memories to all who read it.

We thank all who made it possible for us to obtain this information.

The Cameo Club, 1967





# NICKERSON

*Reno County, Kansas, U.S.A.*

## KANSAS BECOMES STATE

January 29, 1861, Kansas was named the 34th state in the union, a state named to be free from slavery. On January 1, 1861, President Abraham Lincoln signed the homestead Law --a law giving a title from the United States to the actual settler who held the 160 acres he claimed, for five years.

## HOMESTEADING

The first pioneers lived in dugouts and sod houses. The government required all government claims to be marked. Since the early settlers were too poor to buy barbed wire and the closest trees were along Cow Creek, the sections were marked by planting hedge trees along the sections.

Hedge rows, hedge rows who can tell  
Whence they came and whither they go,  
North-South- East-West  
Kansas hedge rows were the very best.

The prairies were wild and raw--one could see for miles and miles in every direction. It was very exciting when a small herd or even one buffalo was seen galloping across the prairies for often it meant meat for the dinner table. The pioneers were excellent hunters for it was the answer to their food supply when an antelope or prairie chicken appeared, he took pursuit.

## OLD TOWN SITE OF NICKERSON

By 1867, pioneers were beginning to move into Central Kansas and a big boost came to this area in 1871 when the Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad came through what was to become Nickerson. The original town site was laid out one mile east of its present location in 1875. A depot had been built on the old town site in 1872 on the north side of the track and the section house on the south side. The town was named for Thomas Nickerson of Boston, Massachusetts, who was president of the AT & SF.

The first postoffice was established in 1873 in the Sears sod house and Mrs. M. S. (Amanda) Sears was the Postmistress. Letters were kept in a cigar box until early settlers came to claim them.

#### FIRST SCHOOL ESTABLISHED

In 1874, the first school house was built to accomodate the children of the settlers who occupied land close to Nickerson. In August, 1875, L. A. Reeves built a two story building and opened up with a stock of general merchandise in the store. In 1876, he sold his store and building to A. Seivert and this was the extent of the growth of "old" Nickerson.

#### CITY MOVES TO PRESENT LOCATION

The present town of Nickerson was laid out on ground owned by John Sears in the year of 1878. It was then just a field of corn with the frame home of the Sears the only building. A few days after the survey of the town site, James Devitt began the foundation of a hotel which he called the Old Dominion House. Soon afterward, A. L. Harlow began the building of another hotel which he called The Harlow House.

Before either of these buildings was completed, Reeves moved his old building from old Nickerson to the new town site and by 1897 he had a number of buildings erected. Then in October, 1878, M. McCormick built a small drug store and it wasn't long until Seivert and Smith had a general store in operation. Nickerson soon had three hotels, two livery stables, two lumber yards, a printing office, and a dozen other stores of various kinds.

#### AT & SF BUILD ROUND HOUSE HERE

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad built a Round House here in 1879 and gave Nickerson quite a push. There were thirty stalls in the round house which was built of stone and had a side track with room for 1300 cars. The railroad paid good wages and there was prosperity for the community.



#### NICKERSON INCORPORATES

June 7, 1879, Nickerson was incorporated as a city of third class. The first mayor was L. A. Reeves and councilmen were, M. McCormick, C. S. Brown, J. A.



Moore, J. O. Smith, H. I. Nickerson; police judge, D. D. Olmstead; treasurer, C. E. Heath; clerk, A. H. Jackson; marshal, J. D. Reed.

The early 1880's showed much growth for this community. Weber's Flour Mill was built a block east of the present D. J. Fair Lumber Co. It was a three-story building with a basement costing \$4,480.17 without machinery. For a few years there was a salt plant southeast of town and also a brick plant. There was "Brownie's" Cheese Factory and another business was the Leinbach Broom Factory.

City Hall was built in 1881 on the present City Band Stand lot. Businesses in the City Hall were the Post Office, Wiley Cooper Book Store; the Opera House was upstairs, City Jail was located on the west side of the hall and the Fire Station was at the rear.

#### POPULATION GROWS AND GROWS

Nickerson boasted a population of over 1500 in 1885 and the payroll of the railroad shops was more than \$200,000 yearly. Records show the population of Nickerson on March 1 in the following years as: 1885--1503; 1886--1852; 1887--1927; 1888--2347.

It was in 1887 that the first electric franchise was granted to Nickerson Electric Co. owned by S. E. Newton, W. H. Frease and L. J. McMere.

#### UNION STRIKE ENDS 15 YEARS OF PROSPERITY

The growth and prosperity of Nickerson was soon to come to an end as the great American Railway Union Strike was called in 1894. Railroad shop men were members of the union and obeyed orders of the Chief of the ARU. A long, bitter fight ensued. The strikers lost and the Round House was moved to Newton. Nickerson population dropped and value of tax property went down as many homes were left empty.

#### BEGIN STRUGGLE TO SAVE THE TOWN

People of Nickerson wanting to save their town, tightened their belts and worked harder. Soon afterwards the Normal College was organized and Nickerson started growing again.

Many improvements continued in Nickerson in the early 1900's. A Telephone Exchange was installed in the City Hall in 1901--business phones were \$1.50 and resident phones \$1.00 per month. By 1909, the water works was established and two years later water lines and sewers were in operation. In 1927 there was natural gas service for the residents.

Nickerson was incorporated as a second class city in 1905.



## DISASTERS CAN'T KILL KANSAS SPIRIT

Nickerson had its share of disasters with the first one occurring in 1874 when drought shortened the crops and the grasshoppers came in abundance and were terrifying. In great clouds they darkened the sky and settled on the trees and growing crops and devoured leaves and branches. The destruction of vegetation was complete all through the summer and fall. In the early spring of 1875, the young locusts hatched and left rapidly and farmers were able to raise late crops.

In 1890, the electric plant burned; a large livery stable burned along with 26 horses in 1894; there was a bank robbery in 1898 and oldtimers tell of others--one in which the robbers tunneled into the building.

July 14, 1948--Tornado

"Storm Demolishes Nickerson and Area" was the headline on the July 15, 1948 issue of The Nickerson Argosy. Every business house and home in the city was hit when high winds and a cloud burst occurred on July 14. Only five businesses opened their doors for customers the following day. The entire town was left without water, lights or telephone service. Nickerson, which had long been known for its beautiful trees, found many of them completely uprooted. Not only was the town hit hard, but many farmers lost buildings, including their homes.

Everyone pitched in to remove the debris and rebuilding started immediately with the result of several new business structures to replace the old.

The story in the Argosy concluded with the fact that most folks were saying "Thank God We're Alive." There was no one killed or seriously injured!

## THE BIG FLOOD THAT NEVER CAME

In the summer of 1965, the Arkansas River flooded in Eastern Colorado and Western Kansas and the U. S. Army Engineers made a survey of the Nickerson area as the flood moved east. With their warning that Nickerson would be under five or six feet of water, residents started moving to higher ground. Furniture, animals, clothes, etc. along with people, made an exodus until Nickerson was virtually a "ghost" town. TV cameras arrived to take pictures and reporters from all parts of the United States called for information on the great flood. It was a happy day when the waters crested and left the town high and dry.

## GRADE SCHOOL HISTORY

In 1873, Walter Jordon, formerly of Saco, Maine, tacked notices on the sides of houses, etc. calling a meeting of people of the area to consider building a school house. The first meeting was held in the depot and the people were to consider notary bonds with collateral to build the school. The building site was given to the community and was located approximately one-half mile east of the present Santa Fe depot.

A second meeting was called and it was decided \$1,500.00 would build a suitable school house for the group. The school was completed in May, 1874, with Mary Kinney as teacher and fifteen pupils: Portor Burge, Ira Sears, Mary Harrison, -----Harren, Charles Huffman, Jennie Devitt, Ernestine Kinney, Jessie Cleavland, Luther Harrison, John Burge, Maude Huffman, Albert Devitt, -----Harren, Fred Kinney.

The group considered it necessary to have a bell although the nearest family lived a mile away from the school house; a dance was held at the depot which proved a huge success and the bell was purchased. The pioneers declared it was the first bell for a school in Reno County. The bell joyfully called the children to learn to read, write and spell and is now at the Baptist Church here in Nickerson. Serving on the first school board in 1875 were Levi Rainer, J. K. Ewing and D. J. Shafer.

In 1879, the white frame school house was moved to the new town site (309 North Nickerson Street) and occupied until 1882 when a brick building was erected at the cost of \$7,000. It was a two-story building with seven rooms. The first principal was W. W. "Eli" Payne.

The grade school was first called Nickerson School and during the boom years of the 1890's there were two schools. The North Side Grade School and the South Side Grade School. The south school occupied the north building of the old high school.

The school was later named Lincoln School by the influence of a Captain Francis, a Civil War veteran and by the members of the G. A. R.

Departmental work was started in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades in 1935-36. In 1955 a new brick building was built one block north of the former site. It was a one story building, including a gym with stage and kitchen. The cost was \$366,000.00. The name was then the Elementary School; and is now a part of Unified District 309, which was formed in 1965.

Present enrollment is 388 pupils and there are 19 teachers on the faculty.

## HIGHER EDUCATION HAS HISTORY

Recognizing that this section of the state was critically in need of a higher institution where its young people could obtain advanced training, the people



of Nickerson and vicinity entered into an agreement with Messrs. J. H. Jackson, Superintendent of the Nickerson City School, and E. B. Smith, President of the Central Normal College at Great Bend, Kansas to organize and maintain a Normal College at Nickerson. A charter was obtained June 30, 1898, and the school was organized under the name of Nickerson Normal College.

The first building was the remodeled South Side School building to which a chapel was added; this became known as the Main Building; the library was built in 1906 and the Commercial Building in 1910 with the Farm Mechanics Building a year later. The gymnasium, which was part of the Commercial Building, burned in December of 1954. The present high school building, was built on the original school building site and was occupied in the fall of 1956. Due to the rapid school growth this building was enlarged by an addition of class rooms and vocational shop building in 1962.

Nickerson Normal College opened August 30, 1898, with an enrollment of 78 students; this increased to 281 by the close of the year, June 9, 1899. Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Illinois and Missouri were represented in the student body the first year.

In 1903, the name of the college was changed to Nickerson College. During this same year, Reno County High School was organized and E. B. Smith became the first principal of the high school and also president of the college.

Due to the building of other schools in the county, changes in district lines and laws concerning our high schools has changed the name of the high school several times. It was Reno County High School from 1903 to 1924; Reno Community High School from 1924 to 1955; Nickerson Rural High School from 1955 to 1966. In 1966, Nickerson Rural High School and 6 grade schools became known as Unified School District 309.

The enrollment at the Nickerson College and High School has fluctuated from a beginning of 70 to the present enrollment of 450. During the teens the enrollment was between four and five hundred in all departments but later dropped to less than 150.

Nickerson has participated in football, basketball, track, dramatic department, debate, instrumental and vocal music and has won trophies and honors in all. The school has rated high in scholarship and in 1931, a Chapter of the National Honor Society was inaugurated for the purpose of developing scholarship, leadership, character and service; this society is still active.

The 1966-67 term enrollment was 452 with 26 teachers on the faculty.



## SPIRITUAL LIFE IMPORTANT TO PIONEERS

Nickerson has always been proud of its churches and at the present time there are three churches in town and four in the rural area.

### FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

The Methodist Church was first organized by Elder J. W. Fox and services were held in the school house until a building was completed in the fall of 1875. The first church was of brick structure and cost \$4,500. The present church was built in 1910 and dedicated in 1911. Rev. Carlton French is the minister and membership is 320.

### FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The first Christian Church was built southeast of Nickerson in the 1880's. Shortly thereafter a small frame church was built in town. The present two-story brick church was built in 1908 at the cost of \$15,000. At that time the membership was 250. Now serving the church as minister is Rev. Herb Kreller and the membership is 202. The church is known for it's beautiful stained glass windows.

### SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH

In 1882, the Baptist Church bought the old school house and moved it to the present site. The building still stands but has been remodeled. The first school bell is still at the church and can be heard every Sunday morning as a call to worship. Rev. Jan Garber is the minister of a small but very active church group.

### MIDLAND COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Midland Church was started in the early 1870's by a group of German families who were homesteaders in what is now West Washington township in Rice county. In 1913 a frame building was built on the present site. This building was destroyed by fire in April of 1936 and was replaced with the brick structure which was dedicated in February, 1937 and the Evangelical Church in Nickerson united with them. It is now known as Midland Community United Church of Christ and the present minister is Rev. Tom Raymond.

### FAIRVIEW METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Organized in 1875, the Fairview Methodist Church met in homes and the Fairview School House until 1893 when a one-room church was built. The present church was built in 1928. Rev. H. S. Smothers is now the minister.

### SALEM COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

The Salem Church of the Brethren was first known as the German Baptist Church and later was named the Dunkards Church. The present brick church was dedicated September 12, 1920. There is a membership of 169 and the minister is Rev. Sam A. Garber.

## MITCHELL CHAPEL METHODIST

Mitchell Chapel was established in 1887 in the community east of Nickerson through the efforts of W. D. Shuler and other pioneers. The church costing \$1,489. 23, was first used December 27, 1887 and was named for Rev. D. P. Mitchell. In January, 1957, the entire building was destroyed by fire. By December of that year, a beautiful new brick building was finished for use. There have been further additions to the building since that time. On April 29, 1962, the church observed its 75th anniversary and dedicated the new building.

## OTHER CHURCHES

In 1878, the Congregational Church was built just west of the Methodist Church; this was an active church but burned and was never replaced.

The Christian Church parsonage was once the Brethren Church.

Rev. F. P. Sweenberg organized the first Catholic Church in this county and it was located in Nickerson. The meetings were held in homes until a small frame church was built. In 1879, a building was completed in Hutchinson for this congregation.

The Evangelical Church was built behind the Christian Church. In 1937 people of the Evangelical Church joined the people of the Midland community and one church was dedicated for both groups.

## LIBRARY SERVES WHOLE COMMUNITY

On February 28, 1916, a group of citizens met to discuss the possibilities of a city library. F. G. Richards gave a report of what requirements were necessary for starting a Public Library Association and a committee was appointed to make plans and secure funds.

The first library was located in the back of the city building with Mr. Murphy as librarian. Shares were sold for \$.50 and a municipal play was presented to raise funds to finance the project. On June 20, 1923, the city building burned and nearly 3,000 books were lost. Insurance collected was \$1250.

The next opening of the library was in the Risley Store. Rent was \$15 a month plus one-half the light bill. Mr. Risley acted as librarian.

In 1936, the State Bank building was purchased for \$1,000 and remodeled to be used as the library until 1940.

The library was then moved across the street to the Brown building where it was located for five months. In 1941 the Skinner Grocery building was purchased and the library was moved to this location and there remains.



There is a circulation of 12,000 books, periodicals, etc. plus books and records available from the traveling library. There is a membership of 1144 people. It is used by students, children and adults alike in the community.

The library was cataloged in 1964 under the direction of Mrs. George Theede and is to be remodeled in the near future.

#### THE MAIL GOES THROUGH

The Nickerson Post Office was established in January of 1871 in the sod house of the Postmistress Mrs. Amanda J. Sears. At one time it was located in City Hall but has been in its present location at 8 North Nickerson Street for many years.

The building was destroyed in the 1948 tornado and mail was dispatched from the Santa Fe Depot for six months until a new structure was completed. Chalmers Hawks became Postmaster in 1959 and there are plans to remodel in the near future.

#### CLUBS AND LODGES PROVIDE SOCIAL LIFE

There have always been quite a number of clubs and lodges in the community. Those in the Fraternal group are IOOF No 190 organized in 1881; AF & AM Lodge No. 42 started in 1882; Order of the Eastern Star No. 33 organized in 1884; and Rebekahs organized in 1885.

Other active clubs in the community are the Federated clubs of Nickerson Woman's, Cameo and Idona. Then there's the S. S. Club, Centennial Needle, PRN, three EHU clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce.

Our town had the first YW in the state which was organized in 1926. It has always been quite active and works closely with the Y-Teen in the high school.

#### WILDMEAD CEMETERY

Wildmead Cemetery has been here since the coming of the early pioneers. On May 19, 1888, a group of women met to form a club and oversee the care of the cemetery. At that time there was \$122 in the treasury and members were enrolled at 10¢ each and Mrs. Cundy was president.

When the City Hall burned in 1923, all the cemetery records were destroyed. The following summer Lena Weber, Mrs. G.E. Ewbank and Mrs. Wallace Hamilton made a map of the cemetery and presented it to the city. The cemetery is now maintained by the city and paid for through taxes.



## MORTUARY

The first mortician was Orlando Jarrett, his business being located in the building which is now occupied by the Nickerson Argosy. In December of 1886 Mr. Jarrett sold half of his interest to John Dawson and the firm was known as Jarrett-Dawson Furniture and Undertaking Co.

In later years a younger man by the name of J. B. Hall joined Jarrett and Dawson. Hall eventually owned the business and then sold it to his son Claude. In 1923, Earl and Gretta Pearce bought the business from Claude Hall and remained in the same building until 1929 when it was moved to the structure which now houses the Nickerson IGA. It was moved to 101 North Paine in 1938.

Jack and Jo-Ann Lamb purchased the Pearce Funeral Home in 1962 and it is still in the same location.

## STORES AND MARKETS NUMEROUS

The grocery stores in Nickerson through the years are too numerous to mention. L. A. Reeves built the first store and the J. S. Dillon chain had its beginning in Nickerson. The early stores advertised for the farmers to sell them eggs, cream, butter and chickens but this is now a thing of the past as most items are government inspected. There were also a number of meat markets in the early days.

## SHOPPING CENTER FOR COMMUNITY

Nickerson has had all kinds of clothing stores, fine hat shops, tailored dresses and suits, regular clothing and dry goods, dime stores, lumber yards, bakeries and so on. With the coming of good roads and automobiles, people started going to larger towns to buy their ready-to-wear and dry goods so the town now has no such store.

## SATURDAY NIGHT A GAY TIME

A history of the town couldn't be written without mentioning the early day saloons which were plentiful along "Front Street". Saturday night in Nickerson was typical of a western movie.

## SIMILAR NAMES FOR EARLY DAY BANKS

Nickerson State Bank and State Bank of Nickerson were early banks in Nickerson. The Exchange Bank of Nickerson was established in 1881 to issue exchange and was not intended as a bank of deposit. It soon was changed to deposit and was known as State Bank of Nickerson.

In 1888 A. D. Butts and L. C. Brown purchased the bank from founder W. R. Marshall. Brown purchased Butts' interest in 1898 and incorporated with \$15,000.

The Nickerson State Bank was established in 1907 with original capital of \$15,000 and the president was F. R. Newton and O. J. Windiate, cashier.

## PRESENT BANK IN NEW BUILDING

The Nickerson State Bank was opened in January 1941 after the town had been without a bank for eight years. Neal C. Klassen moved the bank here from Langdon, Kansas and assumed the part as cashier with Joseph Chesky, as president and H. D. Fossey as vice-president. The capital accounts totaled \$33,000 in 1941.

In September of 1958 the bank moved to new quarters adjacent to the old bank building on Main Street and added the services of a safety deposit vault and a night depository. Presently the capital accounts are over \$200,000. The president at this time is Neal C. Klassen, vice-president, Dick N. Klassen and cashier, Aaron F. Toews.

## NEWSPAPER KEEPS AREA INFORMED

City Hall burned to the ground in 1920 and along with it went all city records and many other historical momentos. Many dates recorded in this history were gleaned from the aging and crumbling files of the Nickerson Argosy dating back to 1885.

In the early days, the growing town of Nickerson had two weeklies and a daily newspaper. The first Nickerson Argosy was published December 11, 1878 by Sargant and Bowman. Thirteen years later they purchased the Daily Register which had been established in 1884. The two remaining weeklies consolidated in 1891 with W. F. Hendry and Joe Hendry emerging as editors and publishers. Through the 90 year history, many editors have been at the helm and the Argosy has continued to be published and as far as is known has never missed a week's issue since its founding. The past 20 years editors and publishers have been Mr. and Mrs. Hillis Beineke and their family.

This is a rural area with wheat and row crops and farmers are beginning to do a lot of irrigating. There are many herds of registered cattle, hogs and sheep.

## CLAIMS TO FAME

Nickerson has had many people who have been outstanding in one way or another and if space would allow, they would all be mentioned but only a few could be picked.

Dr. Roy L. Smith was born and raised in Nickerson. He was a prominent Methodist minister, author, educator and columnist and edited The Christian Advocate for six years. He was often called "Mr. Methodist" and was well known for his syndicated newspaper columns "Sidewalk Sermons" and "Sentence Sermons". He wrote more than thirty books and received thirteen honorary degrees. Dr. Smith died in April of 1963.

A farm south of Nickerson was Don Fossey's home for his entire life and he was a farmer and stockman. He served in the Kansas Legislature from 1927



to 1937 and was speaker pro tem of the Kansas Senate for one term. He established the Don Fossey Rural High School Scholarship Award. He died in May of 1966 at the age of 85 years. His widow still lives on the home place.

Curtis C. Baldwin, former resident of Nickerson, invented the Standing Grain Thresher in 1910 and it was propelled over the field with horses. In 1924 Curtis designed the Gleaner. There were 2800 Gleaner-Baldwin combines sold in Kansas in 1928.

Ernest Bozeman directed the City Band in Nickerson from 1925 to 1965 after its organization in 1920. Mr. Bozeman will long be remembered by this community for the faithful service he gave and the inspiration to the youth. Not only was he band director but he played for funerals and many civic affairs all through the years. He was also in the Hutchinson Band for 50 years. A tribute of thanks to this great citizen. He died in May of 1966 and his widow lives here in Nickerson.

F. A. Mundell was born in Vilas, Kansas December 19, 1877. He graduated from Sterling College and also went to Kansas State, Kansas University and Emporia.

Mr. Mundell taught four years at Nickerson Grade School and in 1909 was a teacher at the high school. In 1918 he became principal and served in that capacity until 1946. He was elected to the Kansas Legislature in 1948 and served three terms. His widow, May, still lives in Nickerson.

"Tony's Market" was well known throughout the midwest and folks from nearly every state in the union stopped for some of the bologna which was a delicacy.

The late Anton Wocknitz came to Nickerson in 1881 from Wisconsin and worked for his uncle, Joseph Chesky, at the Cheskey and Rechif Meat Market. On February 4, 1921, Anton and his son Frank, founded the Wocknitz Meat Market and they developed the recipe for the famous Tony's Bologna. It's reputation grew and it was shipped near and far.

The elder Wocknitz died in 1934 and Frank continued with the meat market and bologna until his death of August 1956. The famous recipe remained a family secret.

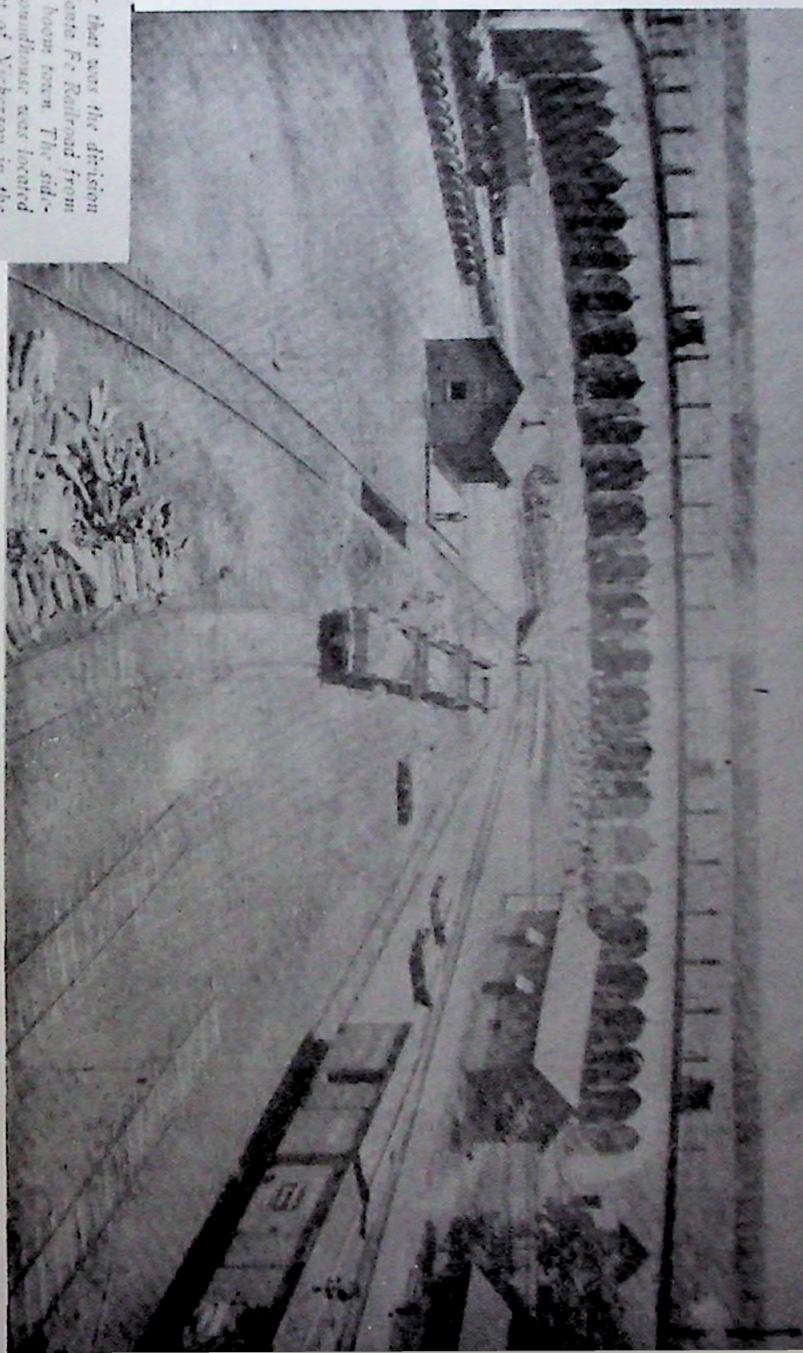
#### FILMS MADE IN THIS AREA BY HOLLYWOOD

In August of 1951, 20th Century Fox of Hollywood moved their equipment into Nickerson to shoot parts of "Wait 'Til The Sun Shines Nellie". Homes used for the picture were those of Mrs. Lizzie Spaulding and H. K. Gourley--there was quite a lot of excitement and many folks came from the surrounding area to see the movie stars.

Once again in June of 1955, Nickerson welcomed actors and crewmen of Columbia Pictures as Nickerson was chosen as a background for part of the film "Picnic". The homes and yards of Mrs. Mildred McFarland and E. L. Beauchamp were used and folks stood around hoping for a bit part or a few words with some of the Hollywood famous.



Thirty miles west in the roundhouse that was the division point for the Atchafalaya, Tule and Santa Fe Railroad from 1880 to 1894 that was Vicksburg a boom town. The shift-truck could handle 1,500 cars. The roundhouse was located on E. Q. West's property, just west of Vicksburg in the city limits.

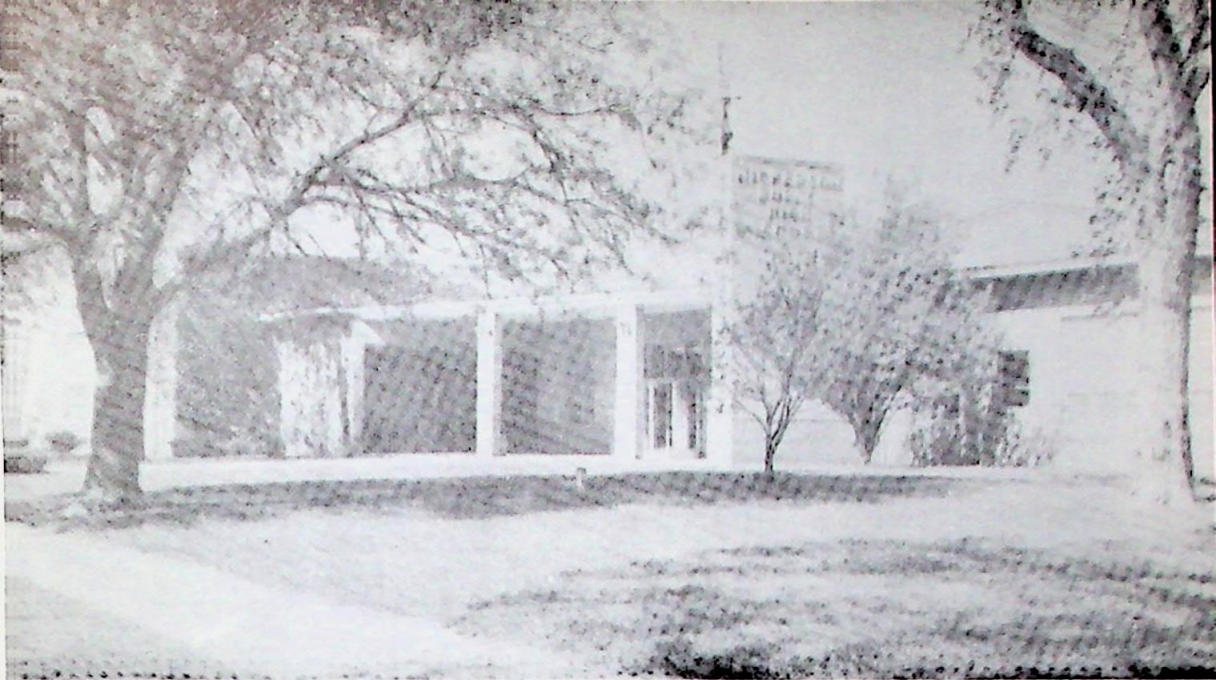






*A picture is worth a thousand words. This is one of a few pictures of early day Nickerson Main Street. The photographer stood near the railroad tracks looking north. Waverly House was one of three hotels in this thriving community. It was a railroad town in the 1880's. Waverly House was at the intersection of what is now the junction of K-96 and Main Street, officially known as Nickerson Street. The faint*





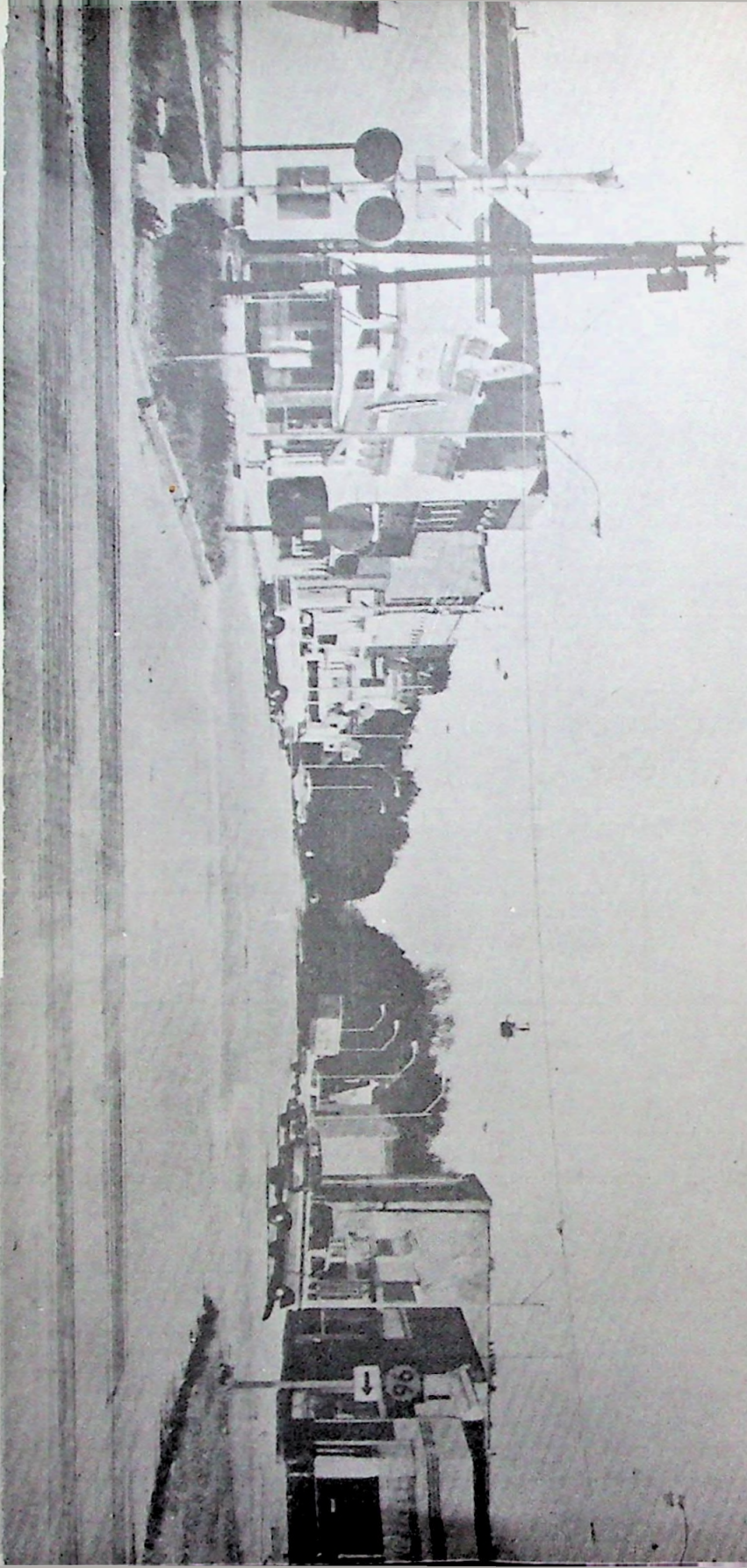
*Nickerson High School, a division of Unified School District No. 309, has 450 students with 26 teachers on the faculty. The old gym burned in 1954. A new structure was completed in 1956 and new facilities added in 1962, all on the original campus.*

*A beehive of activity in its day. Constructed in 1881, City Hall burned to the ground in 1920 and was never replaced. Records, pictures and mementos were burned with all other contents and the building.*

( 17 )







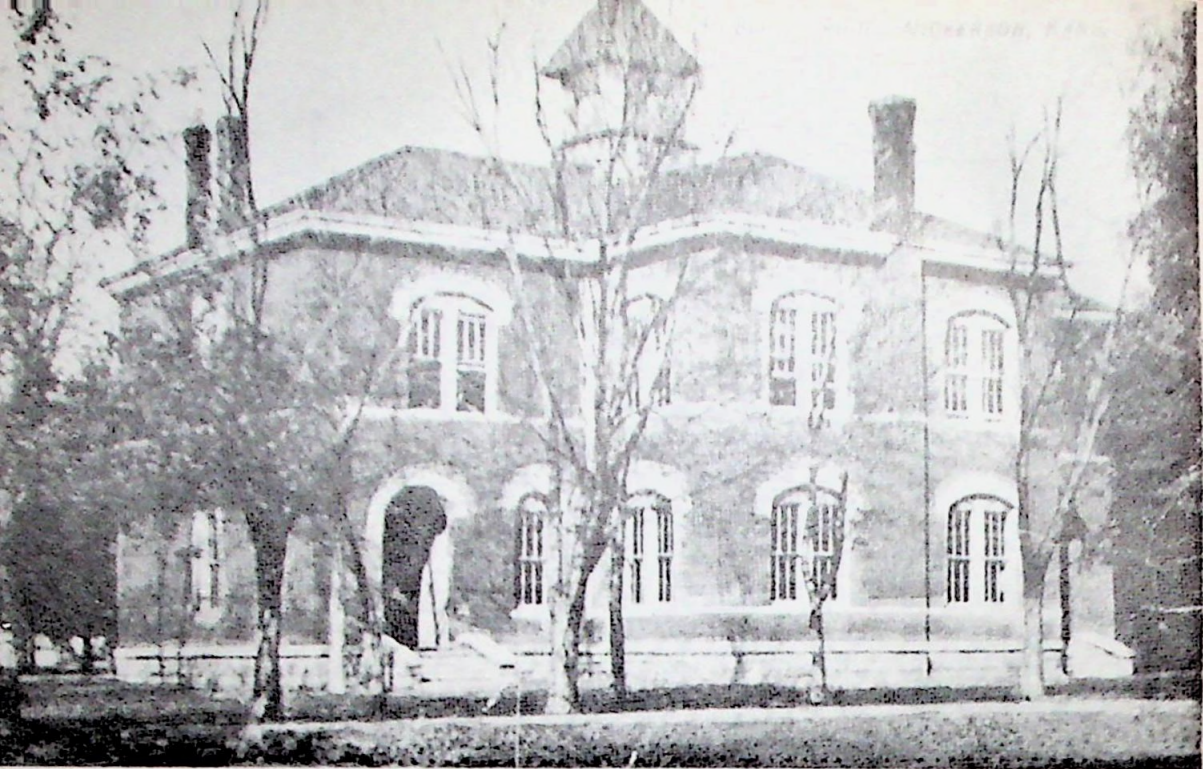
Today's Main Street looking north from presumably the same position as the early day photograph shown on another page in this book





1967 Picture of Nickerson's Main Street looking south from the AT & SF tracks. Nickerson is platted for the most part at 45 degrees, parallel with the railroad tracks; that Main Street runs in the same direction, and the railroad tracks run in the same direction.

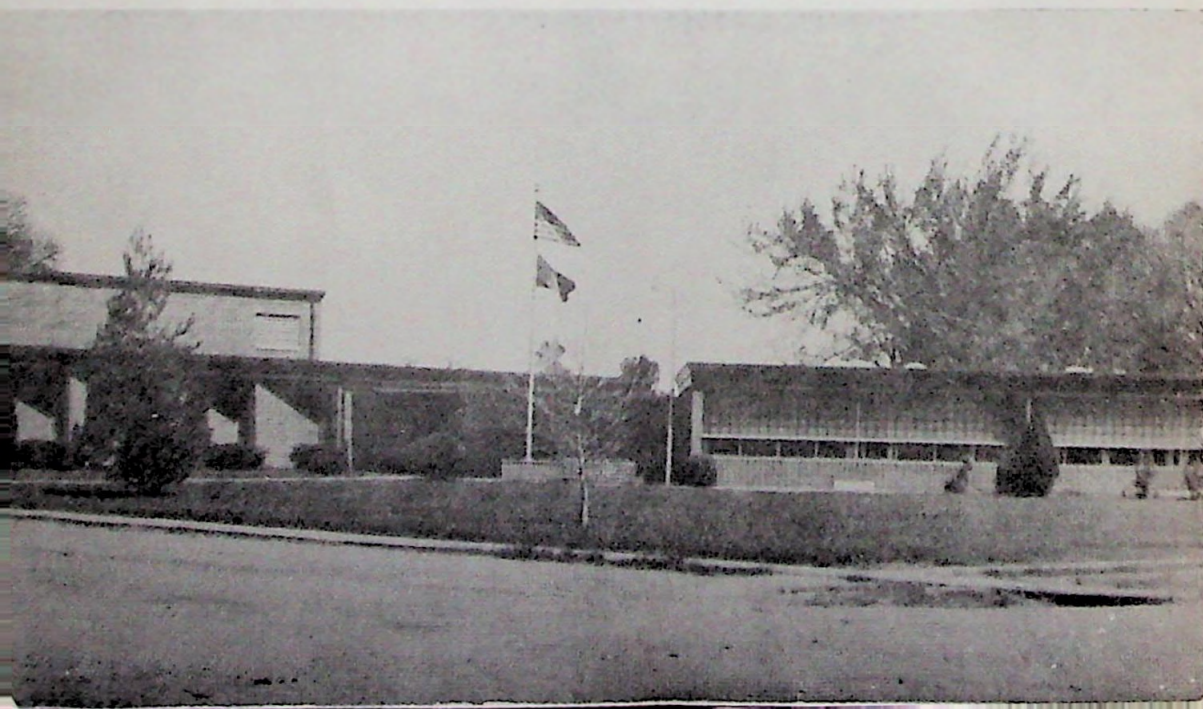




*Northside Public School was razed following the completion of the new grade school in 1955. There are five new homes on the block where the above school stood.*

( 20 )

*Nickerson Elementary School was completed in 1955. The school was adequate at time of construction but has since outgrown its capacity. Three portable classrooms have been added to handle an enrollment of 388 students.*







( 21 )

*Cheese Factory down by the stockyards. This was another of the many businesses in early day Nickerson.*





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*One of the most graphic scenes of the 1948 tornado is this view of D. J. Fair Lumber Co. The firm rebuilt and is now one of the most modern lumber yards in this area. History of the D. J. Fair Lumber Co. goes back to 1872 as a business in Nickerson.*

*In 1965 Nickerson prepared for a flood. Many businesses sandbagged as Berridge's IGA. Most residents moved out of town taking many possessions with them. The U.S. Engineers predicted Nickerson would have five foot of water. Flood waters got into the edge of the city limits.*







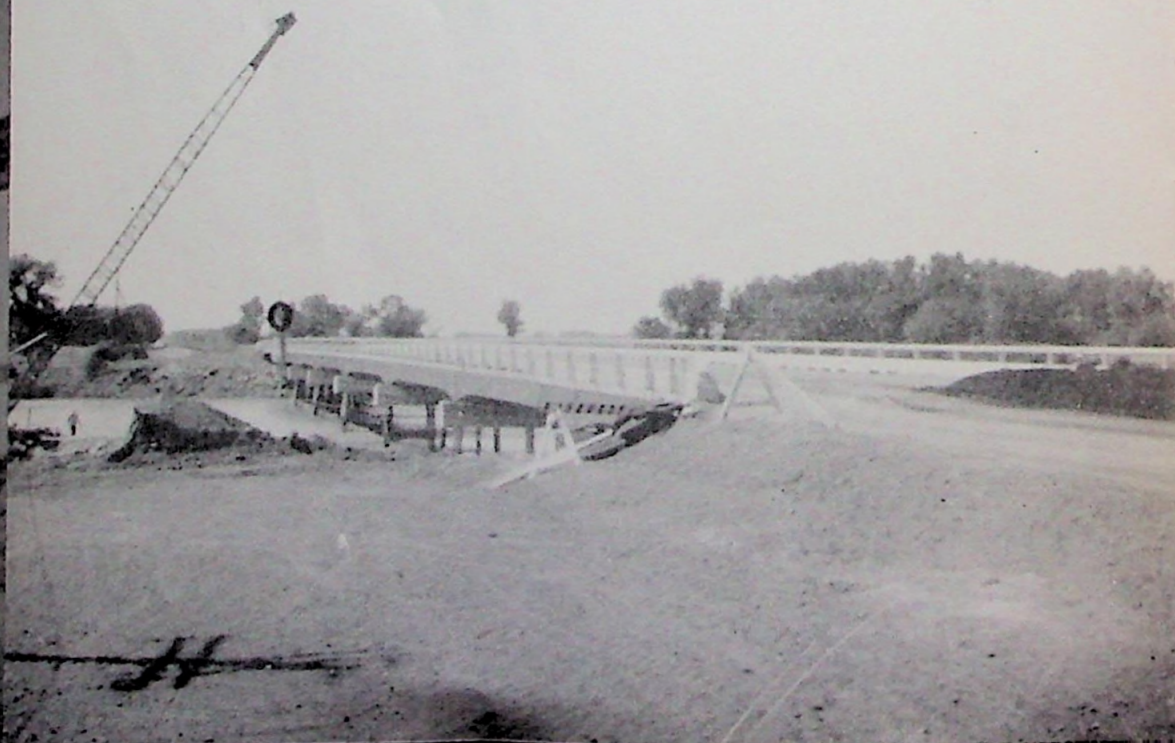
*Notation on the back of this picture says that this is now  
"Rudy Young's Auto Repair and Shorty McGeehee's Weld-  
ing Shop."*





*A wooden bridge (top) over the Arkansas River was built in 1897 and was replaced with a steel-concrete structure in 1966. The bridge south of town has a lot of traffic since the nearest bridge west of Hutchinson is nearly ten miles away and this is the US-50 bridge. The road south to Adams Corner was blacktopped in 1966. Roads in all directions out of Nickerson are now hard surfaced.*

( 24 )





1908, by W. H. WARD.  
Nickerson, Kansas.

CHURCH OF CHRIST  
NICKERSON, KANSAS



*One of the early day churches in Nickerson, still in use. Not much change in the view of the Christian Church of today and that of yesteryear. In recent years the bell tower was removed. The Christian Church was built in 1908 and three years later the Methodist Church was dedicated.*

## PIONEERS AND SENIOR CITIZENS

Albert Engelland was born January 19, 1885. He was raised in the Midland Community where he farmed until his retirement several years ago. He and Mrs. Engelland now live in Nickerson.

Louis Justus is still active and farms on his place west of Nickerson where he and Mrs. Justus make their home. He was born July 29, 1885.

Nellie Watkins Jarrett was born in Nickerson May 10, 1885 and now lives one block east of Main Street.

Hester Kirkhuff Bozeman was born July 3, 1898 and was the wife of the late Ernest Bozeman. She is still active, playing the piano and organ for church and other organizations.

Win Rumble's father was a railroad conductor. He was born October 7, 1884 in the rural area and moved to town in 1965.

James Olmstead is the son of the late Oscar Olmstead and was born on a farm east of town. He farmed near Nickerson for many years. At the present time, Vic makes his home at Abbyville with his daughter, Mrs. Faith Zimmerman.

Emma Jarrett Richardson was born across from the high school on April 6, 1890 and attended schools here. She was a teacher for three years and married Paul Richardson in 1913. She is now a widow living in Nickerson.

Esther Shuler Williams was born July 25, 1885 on a farm southeast of town. At the age of seven months, her family moved to where she now lives, five miles east, 1/4 mile north of town.

Walter Scott Shuler was born March 31, 1891 in a little square house on the site where Otto and Esther Williams now live. Scott now lives a short distance south of the homesite.

George Griffin was born August 8, 1898 and has lived on the present home place and farmed it until a few years ago when his son took over the farming. He married Susie French in 1921 and they have two children, Eula Mae Risley and Bob.

Anna F. Long Schardein was born March 10, 1885 and was married to Fred Schardein in 1908. They had three children, Fredrick, Teddy and Fern. She still lives on the farm.

Alma Margaret Richhart was born November 2, 1891 north of the Rice-Reno County section line. She graduated from the Reno County High School and Southwestern College at Winfield Kansas. Miss Richhart taught 31 years at the Reno Community High School. She lives across from the Methodist Church and is quite active in school, church and community projects.



Fred Beck was born November 17, 1890 in a home west of Nickerson on Highway 96. He married Laura Stelle in 1914 and they have two children, Marian and Mildred.

Gilbert A. Shuler, Sr. was born December 17, 1893 and has lived at the same house all of his life; the house being located directly east of Mitchell Church. He married Mary Lyon and has one son, Gilbert Jr., who also lives in the vicinity.

Miss Katie Bookless was born in a log house four miles south and 3/4 east of Nickerson on October 11, 1889. After 1912 she lived with her brother Ed and helped to raise his children. Katie now lives on north Nickerson Street in town.

Jennie Kirkhuff Beck was born March 4, 1893 and lived on a farm until moving to town in 1951. She has five daughters and one son.

Louise and Lena Weber are sisters born and raised in Nickerson and have lived here all their lives. Lena runs the hardware store which belonged to her father.

Carrie Gibson Dill was born here March 2, 1882 and lives one block west of main street.

Sarah Mummey Gregg was born June 22, 1894 and married Murra Gregg, a local farmer, and they live north of town. They have three daughters and two sons.

Harriett Arnold Anderson was born in the northwest part of town September 27, 1883 and was a telephone operator for many years. She was the wife of the late Dr. Anderson. Hattie still gives piano lessons.

Ed Shores was born November 6, 1880 northwest of town and married a neighbor girl, Ida Spung, who was born in 1881. They reside one and one-half miles east of town.

Blanche Bookless Snodgrass was born east of town on May 12, 1884 and now lives with her daughter Mrs. Rufus Detter in Nickerson. She is a sister of Katie Bookless.

Leo Shores was born on the farm his parents homesteaded three miles northwest of Nickerson on January 7, 1877. He farmed there until 1947 when he moved to town and was janitor of the Christian Church for fourteen years. Mr. Shores is believed to be the oldest resident, born in this community.

Ethel Pate Gregg was born on a farm east of town on December 31, 1891 and was married to Ollie Gregg. They lived on the farm until a few years ago when she moved to town.

Minnie Spung Gambie was born June 3, 1885 and still lives on the Spung homestead which is two miles west and one north of town.

Clinton H. Brooks was born September 2, 1892 and has lived on the same section all his life. Three new houses have been built on the farm.

Mary Ditgen Hungerford was born July 23, 1893 and was a telephone operator for many years. She was the wife of the late Harry Hungerford who for years had a barber shop in Nickerson.

John Lolling was born March 13, 1888, and his wife Margaret Ditgen Lolling was born March 18, 1893. For a good many years they farmed southwest of town and are now retired and living in Nickerson.

Maude Fossey Kellams was born south of town Mary 13, 1892 and is married to Lester W. Kellams who was born in the Fairview district. Mr. and Mrs. Kellams lived on a farm south of Nickerson until retiring and moving to Nickerson two years ago.

Charles W. McGonigle was born December 6, 1890 one and one-fourth miles north of Salem Church. He married Carrie Haskins in 1914 and they still live on their farm, having retired in 1963. He was a diversified farmer and stockman and planted 85 acres of Kafir corn in 1926 which caused a great deal of interest in the Farm Bureau. The Kansas City Star printed pictures and the story.

Oliver Franklin McGonigle was born April 15, 1888 and still lives in the same location one-half mile east of Salem Church. He was a diversified farmer and cattleman and was awarded Master Farmer by the Hutchinson News in 1937 and of Kansas in 1914 by Cappers Publication and Kansas State College. He served as president of Master Farmers of Kansas from 1943 to 1945. McGonigle Health Center in McPherson has been named for him.

#### OLDEST RESIDENT

Mary Van Nattan Owston Burkes is the oldest resident in Nickerson at this time. She was born April 11, 1873 in Missouri and came here at the age of three. She has many stories and pleasant memories of Nickerson.

#### FROM THE ARGOSY FILES

In complying with the ordinance of the City of Nickerson that every able bodied man between the ages of 21 and 50 years and a resident of the City of Nickerson shall pay to the city treasurer \$1.00 as poll tax and if such poll tax is not paid the city treasurer within the next 30 days ending on June 15th, 1888, the same will be collected as the law directs. A. J. Riddell, City Treasurer.

The state commissioner was instructed to collect a road tax of \$2.00 in cash or require two days work on the streets and the city treasurer \$1.00 poll tax from all parties liable for said tax.

In 1888, W. K. Ramsay, marshal and street commissioner was paid \$45.00 per month. In November 1889 the marshal received \$30.00 per month. It was also his duty to keep the side walks and cross walks in good repair.



The City Hall rented the upstairs for dances at a cost of \$16 per night with an additional \$2 extra per each hour used after midnight.

A wooden bridge across the Arkansas river south of town was completed in June, 1897 at a cost of \$7,000 which sum was made up by the donations by the county of \$1,000 and the balance in bonds issued to the amount of \$4,500 and \$5,000 by Grant and Salt Creek Townships, respectively. The structure was 1100 feet in length and was an advantage, the value of which could not be estimated. A new bridge was built in 1966.

An 1880 city ordinance was--reckless horsemen who exceeded the city's speed limit of eight miles per hour were fined \$5 to \$20. Another ordinance prohibited persons from riding their horses down the wooden sidewalks.

#### REMEMBER WHEN ?

Mary Burkes reports her father Nelson Van Nattan received \$1.00 per day in 1876 for shooting geese off the Reeves wheat field.

Lena and Louise Weber's parents came here in 1885--their father had a shop on the east side of the street and made hand tooled harness. In 1893 he purchased the present site of Weber's Hardward and it is now managed by Lena Weber.

Depression years would have been called good years by the pioneer.

Katie Bookless still uses the walnut loom which is a century old; it was used by her mother and is put together with wooden pegs.

Homesteaders east of Nickerson bought fence posts from E. O. Moorman for 15¢ each. The posts were cut from cedar trees in northern Oklahoma.

The first marriage in these parts is thought to be John Renner and Maggie Sears.

In olden times kids didn't wait for the school bus because they didn't come. Kids walked 2 1/2 miles or farther and there was no hot lunch program. In the winter time the lunches often froze on the way to school.

There were no stop signs, no parking meters--just tie up the horse and stay as long as you liked.

Spelling bees and ciphering matches were a great challenge. Taffy pulls were enjoyed by the young and old.

There were times when the snow was as high as the fences and no grader to clear off the roads.

Corn cobs were used to start the kitchen stove and wood was carried in daily to keep the fires going in the winter time. A reservoir on the back of the range kept water hot for dish washing and Saturday night baths.

Schools had pitcher pumps and everyone brought their own tin cup and hung it on a nail. Pot bellied stoves warmed the school rooms-- it was a tossup whether it was best to sit by the stove and cook or sit at the back of the room and freeze. Kids held up one or two fingers to make a trip out to the old two-holer.

Then of course there was that long itchey underwear.

There was the popular "old swimmin' hole" just north of Nickerson on Bull Creek which now doesn't even have enough water to wade in.

Great were the times when the pioneers gathered at the City Hall Opera House where a great time was had by all whether it be a dance, old fiddlers contest, home talent show, or basketball game.

When a meeting for the town was called, people showed interest and attended.

By 1900 the Santa Fe Railroad brought many salesmen to town.

A colored minstrel troupe stopped at the Reno Hotel for a night's show and Dee Lauver and Lee Detter were listening to the impromptu rehearsal and had their first drink of "soda water" and it was flavored with "sarsaparilla".

Chimneys of the kerosene lamps were washed regularly and shined with an old newspaper.

Doctors made a house call driving a horse and buggy. Castor oil and Epsom salts were on everyone's medicine shelf.

A chamber pot under the bed was better than a cold dash to the two-holer on a cold night.

The George Bueford Drug Store, McCormick Dry Goods, H. L. Apple Dry Goods, Turbush Hardware and Coal were all busy with customers.

Mrs. Emma Chittenden, called "Miss Emma" for nearly 50 years as primary and first grade teacher.

And then there was the Michaelis Grocery and W. H. Ward real estate and insurance.

Early day doctors were Dr. Osborne, father of Mrs. Stella Earl, Dr. Wilson and Dr. Fayette.

There was a system of water wells over the town to draw water for fighting fires. The frame of one of the wells is still on the property now occupied by the W. J. Keys.

Mr. Vanattan delivered milk for five cents a quart and folks took their containers and measured out amount wanted.



## MEMORIES

By Ernestine Kinney--written in 1943

From Iowa to Kansas in 1873  
Was when we all thought what fun it would be  
To live in Nickerson on a government claim  
Others living there had thought the same.

It was on the northwest quarter of section 10  
The house still stands, I think of it as then  
It's now 70 years (1873-1943) but it's a landmark yet  
And the pioneer days I spent there I never can forget.

So it was on October 27th when we moved on the claim  
And like our neighbors were soon in the game  
But when night came and we looked all around  
And only two house lights would be seen, our spirits went down.

But there was our Mother so kind and brave  
If Indians came our lives she would save  
With the morning sunlight seven houses we saw  
And miles of prairie wild and raw.

There was Atlanta now Lyons, we could see through the mist  
And Sterling (then called Peace) was on the list  
It was eight miles to the west along the Santa Fe  
And long lines of Prairie Schooners we often did see.

Where are you going they were sometimes asked  
As they plodded along and it was a hard task  
On some canvas covers were written Colorado or Bust  
And onward they went through wind and dust.

There were sod houses and dugouts scattered here and there  
Where families lived and it was a flair  
From the dear old home they had left in the east  
Where at Christmas time they always had a big feast.

Wild plums were our only fruit you know  
Down by the Arkansas River is where they did grow  
From them we made jams and lovely jell  
When they were planted there no one can tell.

From pie-melons we made pies, lemon flavored they were fine  
Preserves and pickles were made from the rind,  
Tomatoes were our oranges, that stood for Vitamin D  
For children with rickets in Kansas we never did see.

Good hominy from corn was often made  
And passed around for our neighbors to praise.  
For the nearest store was eight miles away  
And no one had money and no debts could we pay.

For our fuel what did we have  
When I tell you I'm afraid it will make you laugh  
Cornstalks, buffalo chips and twisted hay  
And for it all not one cent did we pay.

The post office was in a dugout, kept by Amanda Sears  
And somehow of whom we had a great fear  
A cigar box held the letters for the settlers all around  
Happy were we when for us a letter was found.

Of course there were rabbits, when frozen they were good  
With antelope and buffalo meat that made us good food  
Prairie chickens, wild geese and ducks  
When a shot went astray they were in luck.

On July twelfth, 1874, the grasshoppers came falling down  
And they ate everything green that grew on the ground  
Corn and gardens in two days were gone  
I still can hear the grasshopper song.

And then sometime in the middle of the night  
We would get a terrible fright  
As we'd see coming toward us a prairie fire  
And we watched the flames go higher and higher.

Then all would rush with spade and gunny sack  
A pail of water others would pack  
To the fire guards we would hurry about  
Forgetting all about the fireman's song.

At last it was over, the fire we had beat  
Then again towards home we went with tired feet  
Praying that never again might we ever see  
Prairie fires like the ones in 1873.

Our neighbors were Richharts, Byers, Woods, Col. Wirt  
He was the only Doctor and from sick calls he never did shirk  
Others were Ashtons, Johnson, Hoffman and Shores  
The bachelors being Jordon, Tucker, Shaffer, Ewing is number 4.

Yes, there was another bachelor, his name was Jacob Beer  
Don't you think the girls all felt rather queer  
When he went to Iowa and brought home a dear wife.  
And in Nickerson they lived the most of their lives.



There was the Clark family, the father the first Methodist preacher  
And my dear sister Mary Kinney the first school teacher  
Others were Treadway, Sheppard, Sargant and Miss Alice Clough  
Without them there, what could we all do?

We had other neighbors a queer sort of kind  
When walking along the road sometimes we would find  
Moccasin and old rattlers big and small  
Ready to bite us as they always had their gall.

Our light in the window one night cold with frost  
Led to our house a new neighbor from their home they were lost  
'Twas the Yapple family with Wilbur, Orpha and Ida dear  
That voice is now still that said come in and it filled their hearts  
with cheer.

All these were our neighbors so kind and true  
That for each other they were willing to do  
Where are they now? Would you like to know?  
They are sleeping--sleeping with the days so long ago.

So there are my memories of the days of 1873  
That linger on within me, nor long will it be  
Not one will be left to answer the knock at the door  
But we'll all be united when we meet on the beautiful shore.

As of May 1, Nickerson had the following businesses and industries, enterprises, etc.

Western Supply Co., Howard Bentley, president. This company builds and sends air conditioners all over the world. Shops and storage space cover one block.

IGA Grocery Store, D. S. Berridge and Son, owners.

Bill's Meat Market, Bill Fleming, owner.

Nickerson State Bank, Neal Klassen, president.

City Drug Store, Gladys Herrick, owner.

Nell's Cafe, Nell Osborne, owner.

Dr. C. N. Hawk, Dentist.

Knobloch Electric Supply Co., Glen Knobloch, owner.

McCleave Contractor, Howard McCleave, owner.

Weber's Hardware, Lena Weber, owner.

Maxine's Beauty Salon, Maxine Castle, owner.

Nickerson Library, Georgia Battey, librarian.

Ritcha Barber and Beauty Shop, Mr. and Mrs. Olen Ritcha, owners.

Dunn's Insurance Agency, Mr. and Mrs. John Dunn, owners.

(City offices also located in Dunn's office)

Gum's Radio and TV Repair Shop, Earl Gum, owner.

Lamb Funeral Home, Mr. and Mrs. John C. Lamb, owners.

#### Gas Stations

Mildren Oil Co., Bill Mildren, owner.

Borth Service Center, Ed Borth, owner.

Nelson Farm Supply, Harold Nelson, owner.

Davidson Grain Co., Mahlon Stauffer, manager

#### Grain Elevators

Davidson Grain Co., Mahlon Stauffer, manager

Farmers Cooperative Elevator Marvin Heidebrecht, manager

Bussard Tavern, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Bussard, owners.

The Nickerson Argosy, Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Beineke, owners.

Gravel Products Inc., John Paulson, owner.

Holland Tree Trimming and Spraying, Jack Holland, owner.

Santa Fe Railway Co., H. E. Reents, depot agent.

Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. Offices in Hutchinson

Young's Auto Service, Rudy Young, owner.

Nickerson Post Office, Chalmers Hawks, postmaster.

Leichliter Electric, Dale Leichliter, RCA dealer.

Richardson Insurance Agency, John Richardson, owner.

McGeehee Blacksmith Shop, Shorty McGeehee, owner.

Moorman Shoe Repair, Ralph Moorman, owner.

Cooper and Son Seed Co., Lloyd Cooper, owner.

City Jail, in old bank building.



Fire Stations , Both city and county fire trucks are stored in Nickerson.  
Engle's Book and Supply Store, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Engle, owners.  
Unified School District No. 309, located on high school site.  
Jean's Beauty Salon, Jean Camp, owner.  
Recreation Hall, meeting place for men of the community.  
Panther's Den, meeting place for youth of the community.  
Scout Hut, used as meeting place for Girl Scouts.  
Ark Veterinary Clinic, Bruce Detter, DVM.  
Adams Service Station, Paul Jones, owner.  
Dick N. Klassen, Attorney.  
Salem Shipping Association, Mrs. Hazel Slifer, manager.

## REMEMBER WHEN

Cinder walks before board walks were made from cinders from the cinder pit in the railroad yards where engines were cleaned.

The parade on Decoration Day from GAR Hall to the cemetery with W. H. Moorman, veteran of the Civil War, carrying the flag at the head. He was followed by veterans, band, surreys, spring wagons, bicycles and people on foot.

There was a round building in the center of the cemetery with seats for elderly and mothers with babes.

Washington Street was a training track for fancy horses hitched to two-wheel carts. The race track was in the block where the A. T. Danielson home is now.

The tolling of the church bell indicated the age of deceased person on day of his funeral.

A small bag of asfetida on a string around necks of children was used to ward off diseases during the winter months.

Mr. Delano, Santa Fe engineer always blew the whistle in the same fanciful way when he went through town so folks would say, " There goes old Delano."

Boys earned money driving cows to and from the pasture.







